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[From the Musical World, London.]

EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF GENIUS.

MASTERS CHARLES AND ARTHUR LE JEUNE.

Since the creation of Mr. Dickens's infant phenomenon, and that preternatural accession of wisdom to all persons, young and old, which prohibits their being struck overmuch by anything, there has been a general consent to deprecate very early manifestations of intellectual power in that direction. And it is true, no doubt, as a general rule, that great precocity carries with it a serious threat to the growth of mature power. But such a general consideration ought not to interfere with the appreciation of a very exceptional faculty in young children when it exists in a shape that seems to announce the presence of rare and original genius. Sufficient for the day is so very good a thing as that we ought to take the delight of it as it stands by itself, without too anxiously speculating as to the future fortunes of its intellectual growth. We have had the felicity of falling in with two examples of this rare and precious light of exceptional genius and power in the two really wonderful children whose names are at the head of this notice. And we we cannot but esteem ourselves as fortunate in being among the first to announce to those who take a deep interest in the divine art of music, in its highest developments, the accession of promise and power which the musical world has just received. The two brothers of whom we speak are aged respectively twelve and eleven years; and while they have exhibited from babyhood all those signs of musical genius which have been familiar to us all in the biographies of the greatest musical names, their music I faculties have of late taken a direction and exhibited itself in so exceptional a manner as to place them in a category of faculty and achievement quite exceptional, and, we believe, unprecedented.

The first opportunity which the public has had of making its acquaintance with the powers and performance of these children was on Tuesday last, when a very large circle of distinguished musical professors and amateurs were invited to the establishment of Messrs. Bishop and Starr, to hear them upon an organ which that firm has just completed for the church of Handsworth. Besides works of considerable interest by Wéley and Mendelssohn, the programme comprised four of the greatest and most elaborate of the pedal fugues of Bach; the one known as St. Anne's, the C major, the D major, and the well-known great fantasia and fugue in G minor. Only skilled musicians will enter into the full significance, as to musical ability, of the fact which, but for the evidence of our own eyes, we should have been inclined to disbelieve that these were children who played these works—the most sublime, the most complex in the whole range of music—not only without book, but with a precision in the rendering, a fire and depth in the interpretation, an appreciation of the contrapuntal and imaginative side of these incomparable productions, which have probably never been surpassed. The great peculiarity, as yet without precedent, so far as we know, of these brothers is, that they, in fact, seem to have been born at that stage of musical development which even the highest genius has hitherto only reached after years of painful study. We have made it our business to inquire somewhat minutely into the circumstances of their musical growth, and these are so remarkable as to require mention. With regard, for example, to one of the most elaborate of these great fugues, it is the fact that the younger of the children before his last birthday, when only ten years old, had it given to him for the first time on the Wednesday of last Easter week, and played it through without book to his father on the following Friday morning—that is to say, with the study of only a day and a half. Such a faculty as this, of absorbing at once into the system, and giving out again with the highest interpretation and execution, the most elaborate contrapuntal works in the art, at so tender an age, does indeed strike us

as being altogether a novel and unprecedented thing, and to deserve an attention and study different from, and quite beyond, the superficial wonder and interest evoked by the ordinary achievements of precocious childhood; for in their performance of this great music, both these *children of tender age shew not the promise of childhood, but the performance of maturity.*

It is impossible not to indulge in anticipations of the very highest musical future, and one of deep interest to the world of art, from the curious relation of the musical systems of these really wonderful boys to this unapproachable music of "Old Bach." When hearing them execute these *chef d'œuvres* of science and thought (as it has been our privilege to do on the public occasion we mention, and also in private) with a fire and force and steadiness, and always without book, and so as to produce on the mind the irresistible impression that they were *not so much playing remembered music as positively reconstructing it in their minds*, it is impossible for us not to form sanguine expectations of what these children may do hereafter as creators of equivalent art. But remembering the gentle protestation against such speculation with which we began, we will not indulge in such anticipations, natural as they are.

It is scarcely necessary for us to say that the performance of these boys produced a deep and unusual impression upon the auditory, an expression heightened by the extreme delicacy and fragility of their appearance, and by that sort of utter absorption in the works they were interpreting, and indifference to the presence of a large body of hearers, which is one of the most decisive signs of real greatness of musical faculty in an executant. The programme of Tuesday was repeated at the same place on Thursday, and we cannot but hope that the public may, henceforward, have occasional opportunities of witnessing and enjoying the performance of these singularly gifted children; while we must at the same time take the opportunity of expressing a hope that everybody in any way responsible for their lives and fortunes may bear in mind that genius of so profound and exceptional an order as appears to exist in both these boys, may be so precious a thing in its ultimate development as to make it a matter of duty that the promise of the future may not be jeopardized by too premature a ripening, however exquisite to friends and audiences, of its early fruit.

PAGANINI'S CABRIOLET.

Many writers, in their articles on Paganini, the wonderful violinist, have stated that that eminent man had received a brilliant education, that he spoke and wrote with singular felicity all the living languages. This is not the fact. Paganini spoke and wrote but one language, and that was Italian. During the latter part of his sojourn at Paris, he succeeded in comprehending a little of that language, but he never spoke it with facility. The pronunciation he found extremely difficult; and, strange to say, his memory failed in the most simple idiom, although so unerringly accurate in everything relating to music. In Germany, Paganini had the name of being remarkably avaricious, and of pretending to be ignorant of the language, in order to avoid the importunities of servants, who besieged him with demands before and after his concerts. This is a mere fabrication of German scribblers.

The illustrious violinist always preferred conversing with those who spoke Italian. When he met with persons of his own country, his spirits became elated, his manner lively, and his conversation most animated and entertaining. He was wont, in these happy hours of relaxation, to recount many amusing adventures, of which he was the hero. Thus we have heard him repeat the

following anecdote, which, although simple in itself, yet coming from his lips, had an interest and charm almost incredible:

"I was walking one day in the streets of Vienna," he began. "I had not long quitted my hotel, and was quietly strolling without any object in view, and deeply engaged in admiring the fine heads of the Austrians, when a storm, without any previous notice, overtook me. I was alone, and that was rarely the case. To return to the hotel was my first impulse; but, on reflection, I was determined to take a cabriolet. I stopped three successively, but the conductors not understanding the language in which I spoke, passed on without heeding me. A fourth came in view: the rain was falling in torrents, and the weather becoming frightful. I now hailed the coachman most lustily; he understood me at once; he was Italian—a true Italian. Before mounting I wished to make a price with him, and, therefore, asked how much he would take to drive me to the hotel.

"Five florins," he replied. "The price of a ticket of admission to Paganini's concert."

"Rogue, that you are," I replied, "how dare you exact such a price for so short a distance? Paganini plays upon a single string, but you—can you make your cabriolet go with only one wheel? Out upon you, I say."

"Well, sir, it is not as difficult as he pretends, to play upon a single string. I am a musician myself, for which reason I have doubled my fares, in order that I may be enabled to go and see the man they call Paganini."

I bargained no longer. In less than ten minutes we arrived at the door of my hotel. I took five florins from my purse, and a ticket for the concert out of my pocket-book.

"There is the sum that you have demanded," I said to the coachman, "and here is a ticket to go and hear this M. Paganini, at a concert he is about giving at the Philharmonic Saloon."

The next evening, at about eight o'clock, the crowds pressed eagerly at the doors of the saloon where I was to play. I was about entering, when a policeman called to me, saying that there was a man in a jacket* at the door, and notwithstanding his unsuitable clothing, he was persisting, by main force, in getting admission.

I followed the policeman. It was the coachman of the preceding day, who, asserting the right which I had given him, presented his ticket, and insisted on being admitted, stating at the same time, that he was made a present of the ticket, and that they dare not refuse to receive it.

I opened the door for him, and notwithstanding his jacket and heavy, dirty shoes, allowed him to enter, feeling assured that he would be in a moment lost in the crowd, and therefore not observable. To my great astonishment, the moment I presented myself on the stage, I perceived before me the coachman, whose appearance produced a most extraordinary sensation, in consequence of the contrast he presented to the brilliant and splendidly dressed company present, the ladies being in full dress, and the gentlemen correspondingly attired.

My performance was received with a rapture, and applauded with enthusiasm; but the man in the dirty jacket obtained equal publicity and attention. He clapped his hands furiously, and in the midst of my most brilliant passages, when all

*To many of the European concerts, no one can obtain admittance without being suitably dressed, even if he has purchased a ticket.